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Statement by the President of the Security Council

At the 4787th meeting of the Security Council, held on 17 July 2003, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council, recalling all its previous resolutions and statements of its President regarding the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as the conclusions of the Security Council mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2002, welcomes the Secretary-General's progress report of 23 June 2003 (S/2003/665).

"The Security Council reaffirms the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and its support for the 13 April 2002 delimitation decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC).

"The Security Council welcomes the public commitment of both parties to a full and expeditious implementation of the Algiers Agreement of 12 December 2000, and reaffirms the Council's commitment to contribute to the completion of the peace process. The Council welcomes the parties' acceptance of the 13 April 2002 delimitation decision as final and binding.

"The Security Council welcomes that the situation in the Temporary Security Zone has remained calm and that the parties have cooperated well with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and with UNMEE. The Council reiterates its serious concern about outstanding issues referred to in the Secretary-General's report, in particular some restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNMEE that remain and the continuing absence of a direct high altitude flight route for UNMEE aircraft between Asmara and Addis Ababa, resulting in additional costs to the mission.

"The Security Council supports the Secretary-General's observation in his progress report (S/2003/665) that expeditious demarcation of the border is crucial, and expresses concern at the delays so far, particularly given UNMEE's operational cost at a time of growing demands on UN peacekeeping. Delays would be contrary to the wish of both parties to achieve lasting peace and stability as manifested in the Algiers Agreement.

"The Security Council urges the parties to provide their full and prompt cooperation to the Boundary Commission for the beginning of demarcation in

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Sector East and for the initiation of survey work in Sectors Centre and West. The Council calls upon the parties to pursue any matters that may arise in connection with the implementation of the Boundary Commission's delimitation decision within the provisions of the Algiers Agreement.

"The Security Council encourages the parties to continue their cooperation with the Military Coordination Commission in order to resolve military and security coordination issues arising from the Boundary Commission's activities. The Security Council welcomes assurances given by both parties regarding the provision of security for the Boundary Commission's staff and contractors operating in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas during demarcation.

"The Security Council regrets the absence of political contacts between the parties. It believes that political dialogue between the two countries is crucial for the success of the peace process and the consolidation of progress made thus far. The Council calls on both parties to normalize their relationship through political dialogue, including confidence-building measures such as holding alternating meetings of the Military Coordination Commission in each other's capital.

"The Council underlines the United Nations readiness to facilitate political dialogue if requested and to offer strong support in addressing the humanitarian and development challenges that would result from the demarcation of the border.

"The Security Council encourages UNMEE to continue its local outreach activities in order to provide valuable information about the peace process and mine awareness programmes to the local population. The Council welcomes UNMEE's intention to continue quick-impact projects, which provide direct assistance to communities in the border regions, and welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation contained in paragraph 22 of his report. The Council, expressing appreciation to those Member States that have already provided contributions to the Trust Fund for the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Border and to the Trust Fund to Support the Peace Process in Ethiopia and Eritrea, calls on Member States in a position to do so to urgently provide further support to these Trust Funds.

"The Security Council is concerned about the serious shortfall of resources received in response to the consolidated appeals to address the humanitarian consequences of the drought in Ethiopia and Eritrea and calls on Member States and the international community to contribute generously to these appeals."